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SUBJECT: FAJARDO DISPELS IDEA OF A UNITED FRONT AMONG  
INDEPENDENTS AND SPELLS OUT CAMPAIGN PLATFORM

Classified By: Political Counselor John Creamer  
Reasons 1.4 (b and d)

SUMMARY

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11. (C) Former Medellin Mayor and leading independent presidential candidate Sergio Fajardo told us there is not a unified front among the five independent presidential candidates and stressed that he will not join any anti-Uribe alliance. He maintains good relations with President Uribe's advisors, but noted that a Fajardo-Uribe rapprochement is unlikely since Uribe considers him to be too independent. Fajardo said he will run a post-ideological, post-partisan campaign which emphasizes the key role of education and social programs in reducing Colombia's violence. Fajardo continues to deny claims that as mayor, he made a deal with former paramilitary leader Diego Murillo ("Don Berna") to achieve peace in the city. End Summary.

NO UNIFIED FRONT AMONG INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES

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12. (C) Presidential candidate Sergio Fajardo told us on June 6 he is skeptical that recent meetings among the five independent candidates (Fajardo, Senator Marta Lucia Ramirez, Lucho Garzon, Antanas Mockus, and Enrique Penalosa) will translate into a unified political front. In a meeting to voice their opposition to the political reform bill, Fajardo pushed the group to agree to present a unified slate of congressional candidates in the March elections, but encountered resistance based on what he called "personal egos and agendas." Fajardo remains interested in a unified congressional slate, but is less enthused about setting up a process to select one presidential candidate, Fajardo feels he has little to gain in a presidential campaign by allying himself with the other four.

13. (C) Fajardo said the five independent candidates did not reject the participation of Senator Gustavo Petro in "the quintuplets." Petro understood that Garzon occupied the left of center niche within the group, leaving no room for him. Hence, Petro's decision to remain within the Polo and to challenge Polo leader Carlos Gaviria in the party's presidential primary in September. Fajardo said Petro made the right move, noting that Gaviria has moved the Polo "disastrously to the hard left, but will not live forever." Petro will be well-positioned to take over the Polo once Gaviria steps down.

FAJARDO WILL NOT JOIN ANTI-URIBE FRONT

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¶4. (C) Fajardo said he will not join any anti-Uribe front, adding that he maintains good relations with close Uribe advisor Jose Obdulio Gaviria. Still, he ruled out an eventual Fajardo-Uribe electoral rapprochement, claiming that Uribe cannot tolerate his insistence on maintaining his independence. Fajardo said his relations with Uribe soured after current Medellin Mayor Alonso Salazar and he turned down Gaviria's offer for Salazar to run as the U Party candidate in the 2007 mayoral race. Fajardo said they refused Gaviria's overture because they disagreed with some of Uribe's policies and wanted to maintain their autonomy.

¶5. (C) Fajardo said his "gut feeling" is that Uribe will not run again, but stressed that he will proceed with his candidacy whatever Uribe decides. He will not consider any alliances with traditional political parties, such as the Liberals, unless he reaches the second round. Fajardo agreed he lacks a party or political organization in most rural areas, but said he hopes to reach rural voters by mobilizing youth and using the internet.

#### FAJARDO'S PLATFORM EMPHASIZES EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SPENDING

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¶6. (C) Fajardo said he will run on a pragmatic, post-ideological platform. He supports Uribe's increased police and military spending, but feels the key to ending Colombia's culture of violence is through education and social programs. On the FARC, he believes in a humanitarian accord, but does not advocate the negotiation of major political and economic reforms with the group. Such a prospect died with the failed Caguan peace process in 2002.

Fajardo voiced doubts about our eradication policy, but backs interdiction and targeting organized crime. He believes the long-term solution to the narcotics trade involves incorporating the rural poor into Colombia's political and economic mainstream. Fajardo supports the U.S-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement, because he thinks it will help achieve this.

#### FAJARDO REBUTS CHARGES OF DEAL WITH DON BERNA

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¶7. (C) Fajardo denied claims that as mayor, he made a deal with former paramilitary leader Diego Murillo ("Don Berna") to maintain peace in Medellin. He said the GOC, not the city, negotiated the terms of the paramilitaries' disarmament and demobilization. The city was presented with 860 demobilized paramilitaries and no national plan, forcing him to develop and implement a reintegration program on the fly. Fajardo noted that as mayor, he faced heated opposition from traditional politicians with ties to organized crime due to his efforts to end corruption in public works and other municipal contracts. Fajardo voiced concern that such groups might try to murder him, but said he is committed to continuing his campaign despite the risks.  
Brownfield